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ABSTRACT

This study explored the functions of literacy in the Hawaiian language that may be realized in an indigenous language immersion program when the indigenous language is a second language with severely restricted use in the wider community. It also examined the connections between Hawaiian language use, the local culture in Hawaii, and development of a broader base of Hawaiian literacy in the future. Data were drawn from a longitudinal study, begun in 1987, of succeeding cohorts of sixth-grade students and their teachers and parents. The latest evaluation involved 143 Hawaiian Language Immersion program (HLI) students and 50 English-medium fifth- and sixth-graders. The report details the students' perspectives on the functions of Hawaiian literacy in an immersion setting, including perceptions of (1) Hawaiian as a medium of instruction and language of survival in school, (2) ceremonial, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions of the language, (3) students as creators of Hawaiian stories and text, (4) students as readers of Hawaiian text, (5) students as translators, (6) bilingual empowerment through Hawaiian and English literacy, and (7) advantages to being bilingual. Contains 17 references. (MSE)

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Functions of Literacy In An Indigenous Second Language: Issues and Insights From An Ethnographic Study of Hawaiian Immersion

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Helen Slaughter

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Background.

Nine years ago (1987) parents and Hawaiian language advocates persuaded the State of Hawaii, Legislature and subsequently, the Department of Education, to initiate an early total immersion program in the Hawaiian language. The initial purpose of the program was to save the indigenous language and culture of the Hawaiian people for future generations. The Hawaiian language was perceived in a state of language death, as fewer and fewer native speakers remained who were fluent in Hawaiian, and these few were largely in the elderly generation. After a small beginning, with two combination classrooms on two islands, the Hawaiian Language Immersion (HLI) Program has now grown to over 1200 students at immersion sites on all the major Hawaiian islands. The program extends from grades kindergarten through grade four in total immersion, and to grades five to ten, (anticipated through grade 12 in 1998), in partial immersion with approximately only one hour a day of instruction in English through high-school as an ideal goal. English and/or a variety of English called Hawaiian Creole pidgin, is the first, and dominant language for virtually all of the students. Only a small proportion of the students parents, approximately 15 %, speak Hawaiian fluently, and they also speak Hawaiian as a second language.

The history of literacy in the Hawaiian is a relatively long one, beginning with western contact in 1778, and extending to the time in the early 19th century when the missionaries created a written version of Hawaiian so that they could translate the Bible, spread the Christian religion, and also provide general education. The history of the Hawaiian language has recently been studied by Schutz (1996), who showed that the linguistic work of the early missionaries had a decided impact on the written as well as subsequently on the spoken language. Debates about the purpose and function of Hawaiian literacy have gone on since the mid-nineteenth century, as both the culture and the language began to become partially integrated with that of the American and European groups who came to the islands after contact.

As will be seen, the preservation of the Hawaiian language is closely tied to literacy in Hawaiian, and this is especially true for Hawaiian Language

Immersion (HLI) since all HLI teachers are second language speakers of the language and have relied upon print, as well as oral interaction, in learning the language in the first place. Teachers often refer to the Hawaiian dictionary (Pukui & Elbert, 1986), which is mainly a bilingual translators dictionary, during the course of instruction. This is observed particularly in new teachers to the program.

Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this paper is to explore and elucidate the functions of literacy in Hawaiian that may be realized and anticipated, and/or desired, in an indigenous language immersion program, where the indigenous language is a second language with severely restricted use in the wider community. Along with this, this paper will explore the interconnections between use of the Hawaiian language, the "local" culture in Hawaii, and the development of a fuller literacy in the Hawaiian language for the future. The HLI program has created a demand, or press, on Hawaiian language educators and users to deliver a curriculum that is taught and learned almost entirely, to the degree possible, in an indigenous language which has not been widely used, except in the restricted areas to be described below, for over a century. It should be noted that students in Hawaiian immersion are developing a range of literacy skills in Hawaiian, but it is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate their progress except as it pertains to the research question. (However, this is reported elsewhere, e.g. Slaughter (in press); Slaughter, Lopes, & Nihipali, 1997; Slaughter (1995); Slaughter (1993)).

Theoretical Background and Perspective.

Language planning and policy regarding the reinstitution of an indigenous native language is complex politically and educationally and is an area often marked by political conflict and factionalism (Baldauf & Luke, 1990). Initially the Hawaiian Language Immersion program was viewed with trepidation and disdain, as questions were raised about the usefulness of learning Hawaiian, the quality of the Hawaiian language that would be taught and learned in the schools, and the future English proficiency of students in the program. However, as participating students demonstrated a high degree of fluency in the Hawaiian language, along with promising results at the end of grade six on English language standardized tests in reading and mathematics, the program grew in terms of parental and public support and attracted greater numbers of students than could be accepted into the program.

In a review of minority language bilingual programs a number of years ago, Engle (1975) suggested that literacy in a native language should be judged on the basis of its potential economic and social value to the students. This implies that only a native language which is in world-wide use would be worth the expense of developing into a full literacy in the schools. However, as advocates of Hawaiian often remind critics, Hawaiian is only used in Hawaii, and even then on a limited basis, and if it is to be preserved must become more fully embedded into the educational system.

In looking at the same issue of the "worth" of reviving the indigenous language, Joshua Fishman in Language and Ethnicity: in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective, (1989) argued that the larger nation states should be tolerant and supportive of the smaller languages, in that knowing ones own language is important in culture and identity. However, Fishman acknowledged that a limited library, or number of texts in a language, can create a difficulty in developing full bilingualism in an indigenous language. As a result of the missionaries creating an orthography in Hawaiian, and the widespread use of Hawaiian language print in the Christian religion, newspapers, government, and business in 19th Century Hawai'i, there is an available literature in Hawaiian, but one which has been in great need of expansion and updating for use in the late 20th century. Lately creative translations and adaptations of materials originally written in Hawaiian have been produced for the immersion program. Then too, there are many Hawaiian words in common use in Hawai'i, suggesting a cultural presence that is visible to all.

Further complicating this area of inquiry is a changing view of literacy, which encompasses a view of literacy as a kind of flexible but rigorous transactional and critical thinking, a literacy which incorporates technology, and that extends back and forth from print to the communicative arena of style and/or performance dimensions observed in speech events. (Myers, 1996; Luke, 1995) These newer sociolinguistic perspectives on literacy are especially important to the bilingual language theorist as they suggest a more active, constructive language user, connections between oracy and literacy, and acknowledge the importance of the bilingual language users facility in code switching, and selection of language according to purpose and social context. For instance, Myers (1996) included an "oral performance" dimension to literacy, a bringing together of the oral and written languages, a dimension of language and literacy that is prevalent in contemporary Hawaiian culture.

Sociolinguistic definitions of the "functions" of literacy, and its underlying conceptual base, is not unproblematic however. Heath (1986) suggested that while correct oral reading and responses to standardized questions were the model of good reading in the late 19th century, employers' definitions of good literacy in the late 20th century focus more on the integration of mathematical and linguistic skills, the capacity to learn on ones own, including the development of listening and speaking skills for use in the marketplace. In addition, there is often an overt or subtle clash between the perceived demands of the economic marketplace, and world trade languages, and that of language revivalists of indigenous languages or of classical languages, i.e. Maori and/or Latin in the schools, as noted in controversies over language policies in New Zealand schools. (Benton, 1996)

There has been an increasing academic interest in how intellectual constructs and theories play out in terms of local conditions and politics. According to Bender, (1997), an emphasis on "*ethnos*, on the situated speaker or interpreter," and "the emergence of academic postmodernism, which emphasizes the local, the particular, the fragmentary," is a result of the shift from the past focus on universalistic categories, which are now seen as biased towards, and based too narrowly in western culture (p. 28). For instance, Heath (1986; 1983) found that community uses and practices for socializing children into the world of literacy varied by social class. According to Heath, (1986; 1983), community uses of "functional" or "practical" literacy in homes in an all-black working class community in the Southeastern United states were quite different from mainstream educators' views of literacy.

Heath's seven dimensions or main uses of literacy in the all-black community were:

- 1) instrumental or the use of print connected with everyday practical experience,
- 2) social-interactional,
- 3) news related,
- 4) memory-supportive, such as notes and records,
- 5) substitutes for oral messages,
- 6) legal records, and
- 7) confirmation via print, e.g. to settle disputes.

(Heath, 1986, p. 21).

Heath noted that "it is significant that these types do not include those uses - critical, aesthetic, organizational, or recreational . . . usually highlighted in school-oriented discussions of literacy uses" (1986, p. 22). Thus there may be a distinct list of literacy functions for each cultural group, as will be seen in the Hawaiian case, as well as some more global functions.

The above introduction, albeit very brief, to a research based discussion of functional literacy suggests the wide disparity and differences in conceptions of a) what it means to be a literate person in a specific community outside the school context, b) what a particular school's message is about literacy, and c) what it means to be a fully functioning literate person within in a particular school context. Furthermore, there is the recently highlighted issue of d) what is the kind of literacy that economically functional and/or elites need to be able to present to the broader community in order to survive and hopefully thrive in today's world. These questions are further complicated by the current interest in what it means to be a fully functioning cultural participant in an indigenous culture within, and as a part of a pluralistic, democratic society.

In summary, it would seem that any discussion of the functions of literacy, in a first or a second language, would need to address questions of 1) the functions of literacy within the student's home community, 2) the functions of literacy presented through the curriculum and in teaching learning practices in the classroom and school, 3) the functions of literacy in the broader society that are required, or are perceived to be required in the near future, of students in their post-secondary school lives, and 4) the functions of literacy for participants in an indigenous language and cultural revival movement.

Method of Inquiry.

The data-base for this study is from a longitudinal study of the Hawaiian language immersion program, begun in 1987 and continued until the present. The study has been largely qualitative and ethnographic, involving observation in the schools, interviewing of participants, and long-term involvement in the changing political and practical dialogue regarding the program. A major focus of the study has included observing and interviewing succeeding cohorts of sixth grade students, their teachers, and parents regarding their perceptions about the HLI program, and the students biliteracy. In the latest evaluation, one-hundred and forty-three HLI students and 50 English medium fifth and sixth grade students were also surveyed about their attitudes towards Hawaiian on the Language and Culture Questionnaire, (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1988) and

selected results from this questionnaire are included in this paper. (Slaughter, Lopes & Nihipali, 1997)

Functions of Hawaiian Literacy in an Immersion Setting.

This section will discuss the interconnections of oral and written English and Hawaiian as it pertains to the students literacy, and will also address the issue of whether or not, or to what extent, the Hawaiian immersion curriculum is a mere translation of the English curriculum. Due to space limitations, only a few of the functions of literacy will be specified here. The functions of Hawaiian literacy as it pertains to the broader issue of reviving and revitalizing the Hawaiian language, and the students' futures will also be discussed.

Functions of Hawaiian literacy: Students' perspectives

1. Hawaiian, a medium of instruction, and a language of survival in school. Hawaiian, both oral and written, is used throughout the school day by students and teachers in the Hawaiian immersion program. Students must learn to interact and learn through a second language in an immersion program, and they exhibit a high frequency of use and fluency in the language. Lessons are presented in Hawaiian, and oral classroom discourse is in Hawaiian, especially when it involves the teacher. Teachers in HLI have demonstrated a high degree of adherence to the exclusive use of Hawaiian during the school day, and students learn to respond and use Hawaiian in classroom discourse when directly addressed by the teacher, or when the teacher is monitoring their behavior. However, students also use English, their first language, in small group work and on the playground as a natural part of their behavior. Most students when interviewed say that they play and interact in English when at home, although there are a few students who maintain that they use Hawaiian at home also. The use of English at home is due partly to the fact that only a small portion of the parents of immersion students are themselves fluent in Hawaiian, and students will often say that they are the best speaker of Hawaiian in the family.

A great many children's picture books as well as some longer works of children's literature, such as Charlotte's Web and Isle of the Blue Dolphins, have been translated into Hawaiian and provided to classroom teachers. Some of these books have had Hawaiian text cut and pasted on top of the English text of published books, and others have been translated and printed in Hawaiian. Mathematics textbooks have also been translated and printed into Hawaiian, as well as some science books. In addition, traditional and other literature

originally printed in Hawaiian in the past, usually from the 19th century, have been modified and edited for use in the HLI classroom. Furthermore, some new materials, such as traditional stories written in Hawaiian, have been prepared for the immersion classroom. Despite this intense effort for producing Hawaiian print materials for the immersion classroom, it appears that an immersion program can never quite keep up, or hope to compete with the massive English language educational publishing industry. The lack of new materials, and of a variety of materials, in all curriculum areas begins to have an impact upon the program especially in the upper elementary grades.

Instruction in English is considered a part of the curriculum for one hour a day, beginning in grade five. At this point, teachers attempt to help students develop strong English literacy skills, while maintaining a Hawaiian immersion climate in the classroom. For instance, lessons pertaining to social studies or the English language arts may be presented and explained as much as possible in Hawaiian, but the source materials that students use may be in English. Published print may sometimes be in English, even in the "Hawaiian" part of the curriculum, due to a lack of published work in Hawaiian. This despite the fact that an enormous effort, as noted above, has been made to provide Hawaiian printed materials for the program. There is some apprehension that an excessive reliance upon translations from English materials may be giving mixed messages to students regarding the worth of Hawaiian literacy, and also, that the heavy reliance upon English materials may mean that HLI is actually a "translated" curriculum, rather than one deeply based in the Hawaiian culture. On the other hand, this view may be a victim of dichotomous thinking -- that there is a pure "western" way and a pure "Hawaiian" way. Such thinking may set the tone or paradigm for discourse in this area on a downward spiral, where Hawaiian language and literacy is seen as a "secondary" type of language/literacy because of the influence of missionary orthography on the language itself, especially on the language of those whose oral language is derived from instructional modes based on the written Hawaiian. It may be more fruitful to take a perspective where the immersion program establishes new bases for curriculum, one which blends and creates a curriculum which transforms older notions and better meets the needs of today's children of Hawaiian ancestry. Teachers of HLI are increasingly working towards more creative ways to develop and deliver curriculum so that it will embody Hawaiian culture and visions for the future.

Immersion in Hawaiian literacy constitutes a major dimension of almost all aspects of the HLI curriculum. In the ensuing discussion, I will attempt to raise the issue of more and less authentic functional literacy within a classroom setting, albeit that this distinction is somewhat controversial.

2. Hawaiian, ceremonial, aesthetic and cultural dimensions. In many of the immersion sites, students chant in Hawaiian to obtain entry into the school in the morning, and when the teachers approve of their chant, including the quality of their speech, they chant to allow students into the classrooms. Hawaiian is also an important part of the Hula, a dance that is taught in the schools and is part of special events. Both of these reflect the oral tradition of Hawaiian language use. In this, there is continuity between community use of Hawaiian and the hula, and the school. Bringing chants and hula into the classroom reinforces the oral language development of students, while embedding the school day in a valued cultural practice.

Hawai`i is well known as a tourist destination, and for having a tourist economy. Increasingly tourists are interested in learning and experiencing something of the Hawaiian culture when they visit Hawai`i. This in turn has supported Hawaiian music, hula and crafts. Of course, there are mixed feelings and attitudes about tourism, from the extremely negative (Trask, 1993) to the highly positive attitudes of the business interests that rely upon it. Then too, there is the duality of the commercial packaging of Hawaiiana for outsiders, and the many different local traditions for preserving culture of the local residents of Hawaii. While there is some integration of the two, the celebration of Hawaiian culture by Hawaiians and others who reside in Hawai`i is not done for the benefit of outsiders, but as an important part of everyday life in Hawai`i. Immersion students are especially advantaged as participants in these authentic celebrations of Hawaiian culture, and have greater access due to their command of the oral and written Hawaiian language. However, it should also be noted, that most people of Hawaiian ancestry do not speak Hawaiian, and many Hawaiian cultural traditions, including other major cultural revival efforts do not require a command of Hawaiian. For instance, the Hokule'a, the double-hulled voyaging canoe which traveled from Hawaii to Tahiti and back, is celebrated in Hawai`i's schools in a curriculum written in English for the widest dissemination possible.

3. Students as creators of Hawaiian stories and text. Partly from necessity, and partly as good curriculum, students engage in a great deal of

writing in Hawaiian to support learning, and to have Hawaiian printed materials in the curriculum. Some of the students stories have been published by the Hale Kuamo`o, a center for the Hawaiian Language and culture located at the University of Hawai`i, Hilo. Teachers are continuously translating and/or creating materials in Hawaiian for students to use. Students also translate, as part of some of their lessons, and also to create materials in Hawaiian to share with others. For instance, students at one immersion site interviewed the HLI teachers at the school, and wrote news articles about the teachers. This work, of students as authors, has been greatly facilitated by the use of technology in the form of word processors and fonts adapted to Hawaiian orthography, websites and listserves in Hawaiian (Hartle-Schutte, & Nae`ole-Wong, 1997). Indeed using technology in literacy activities is increasingly an important part of contemporary literacy usage and instruction.

4. Students as readers of Hawaiian text. In the primary grades, a large number of contemporary children's books are translated into Hawaiian for the schools. However, as students get into the upper grades, fewer texts are available. Many of the most used Hawaiian texts at the upper levels are in the area of traditional Hawaiian legends and stories, and translations or adaptations of these kinds of texts are considered superior to many of the translations from English texts. Students tend to perceive their Hawaiian reading as limited, but important, and when translated from the English, redundant, although they enjoy and appreciate what is available. In a survey of fifth and sixth grade immersion students, HLI students indicated that they liked to read books written in Hawaiian (91%), and they liked to read books written in English (83%), but that they also wish that more social studies or science lessons used Hawaiian books or other Hawaiian printed materials instead of English printed materials (75%). (Slaughter, Lopes & Nihipali, 1997).

5. Students as translators. As students enter the fifth grade, and a wide range of materials in Hawaiian for curriculum "coverage" becomes more of an issue, students are often given readings and assignments in English, but are asked to respond in Hawaiian. This often involves translation, something that students develop some skill at doing. In fact, a study of Spanish immersion students by Cohen (1994) suggested that immersion students may cognitively be engaged in translation during problem solving and other cognitively complex tasks more often than previously thought. Students appear to switch from one language to another relatively easily, and their responses to a Language and

Culture Questionnaire, (Slaughter, Lopes & Nihipali, 1997), indicated that students' believed it was easy to switch from speaking Hawaiian to English, and vice versa, (82%), that it is easy to read in English and write about it in Hawaiian (78%), and vice versa, (74%), and that it is easy to respond in Hawaiian when the teacher reads aloud or gives directions in English (85%).

6. Bilingual empowerment through Hawaiian and English literacy. Literacy is pervasive and of high status in contemporary American life and in the global society. To be orally fluent in ones indigenous language, but unable to read and write, is looked down upon as "primitive," however unjust that view may be. Furthermore, the legalistic and constitutional nature of modern society demands written documents, and written argument to get ones voice heard. While Hawaiian may not be prevalent to the extent that many people in Hawai`i, either of Hawaiian ancestry or other ethnic backgrounds can actually speak the language, a strong and growing literacy in Hawaiian language contributes to ethnic identity and status. Part of the vision of the private immersion preschool, Pūnana Leo, and of the HLI schools, is that today's keiki (children) will become the future cultural leaders and preservers of the Hawaiian language. As a rule, HLI students indicate that they enjoy learning Hawaiian, (98%), and that they plan to continue studying Hawaiian when they grow up (94%). They also plan to learn as much English as possible (80%). The students are very aware of their critical role in preserving the Hawaiian language, with 98% agreeing with the statement that "it is important to speak Hawaiian so that the Hawaiian language can be preserved."

7. The Bilingual Advantage. Last but not least, there are advantages in being bilingual. Dominant popular ideology in the U.S. has always pitted one language against another, but the real point, and reality, is that being and becoming bilingual is a critical element in any globally oriented education, as well as having local relevance. Students in the HLI program, to a greater extent than those in English medium classrooms at one of the immersion sites having a large percentage of Hawaiian and part Hawaiian students, indicated that they enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages, 90% vs. 64%, and that they would like to learn a lot of foreign languages, 81% vs. 68%.

Discussion

Literacy in Hawaiian has been highly related to learning, maintaining and developing the Hawaiian language, and credentializing the program. The existence of the program gives hope to the Hawaiian people, and has been

instrumental in creating, as well as resulting from, a pressing need for a revitalized language and literature. In addition, as noted by Joshua Fishman, "Minority language literacy is also increasingly required to assure a future generation (particularly, a modernized generation) of intra-communal leaders, writers, poets, and religious functionaries" (1989, pp. 420-422).

However, Fishman also warned against placing too large a burden upon the school system for language and cultural restoration and survival: "To rely upon the school to do for language and culture what neither the family nor the neighborhood will or can do is to court disappointment and to avert one's eyes from the basic loci of ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic continuity" (1989, p. 423). Therefore strong ethnolinguistic community involvement, including maximum parental involvement and intergenerational involvement, in an indigenous immersion program is essential. Hawaiian immersion has taken giant steps in this direction, but there is still a question of home school discontinuity because so few parents persist in their learning of Hawaiian to a level of fluency where they too feel empowered as speakers of the language. Much is being left up to the teachers and students -- and especially to the uses of Hawaiian language and literacy that students will create in their own futures. Only time will tell the direction that Hawaiian may take, and while this may be related to the outcome and direction of the sovereignty movement in Hawai'i, only a minute fraction of adults of Hawaiian ancestry have any command of the language.

In Israel, Hebrew eventually became used in the community and home as the multi-lingual Israelis found it convenient to use outside of school and this use strengthened the language, but it was when Hebrew became the national language that everyone was forced to master Hebrew for economic survival (O Laoire, 1966, p. 67). On the other hand, in Ireland this hasn't happened, quite the reverse, possibly because "families in general had become alienated from the cultural nationalism model on which the revivalist premises were based" (O Laoire, 1966, p. 67). Also the Irish focused on grammar and getting into the University, (during which time they would study through the medium of the English language), not on the functional use of the language, or communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence. However, Gaelic is becoming a part of youth culture, and this may help it attain prestige

In Hawaii, interest and learning of the Hawaiian language has gained enormous momentum at the University level, if not quite spreading to the parents of HLI children. Both the HLI program, with its new demand for

teachers at all levels of elementary and secondary education to learn Hawaiian, as well as the Hawaiian sovereignty movement have contributed to this trend. Hawaiian literacy functions well in classroom language arts and all other areas of the curriculum in the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program, and both the Hawaiian community and the broader community continue to seek and find ways to make Hawaiian language and literacy relevant to students' lives both inside and outside of school.

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